

year as some editors and executives, even at storied institutions, crumble under pressure to police speech, to conform to orthodoxy, and to stifle the exchange of ideas instead of what they should be doing, promoting the contest of these ideas—in other words, speech, orthodoxy, and exchange of ideas—when they are under attack.

It is now old news, but, last summer, a long-time opinion editor of the New York Times was pushed out of his position. For what? For having the audacity to publish an opinion piece written by Senator TOM COTTON. Apparently, a group of readers and employees found Senator COTTON's ideas so upsetting as to warrant the removal of the editor who had the guts to publish them. The paper also issued a several-hundred-word editor's note even expressing regret for publishing the piece in the first place.

If those readers and employees at the Times disagreed so strongly, the public could have learned something by publishing a counter-argument instead of reading about their regret. I, myself, have publicly disagreed with Senator COTTON about a policy idea or two, and I make my points here on the Senate floor. I don't ask for Senator COTTON's resignation, like they had to expunge his or give all sorts of excuses why they published that and they shouldn't have published it.

Instead, what do we have? We had executives at a paper of record scapegoat a colleague for failing to confirm to some yet unexplained orthodoxy versus a rational decision to engage in public debate on their pages.

In January, POLITICO invited a slate of individuals to guest-edit their widely read newsletter, "Playbook." Among those guest editors was Ben Shapiro, a conservative commentator. His name alone was enough to spark a backlash among staffers and even outside commentators. To their credit, the editors of POLITICO did not apologize.

But according to the Washington Post media writer, some POLITICO employees who privately supported the choice to publish Shapiro were "afraid" to speak up on staff calls, fearing backlash among colleagues.

Now, that is only two episodes I give you, but these episodes represent a very unhealthy environment where too many think it is prudent to give voice to those with whom they agree or whose views are deemed acceptable.

While the editors did the right thing at one outlet, they didn't at the other. Either way, it probably means that they will be more selective about what is acceptable—what is acceptable—in the future as we do the businesses of our newspapers.

Now, when you worry about what is acceptable, it certainly doesn't serve those principles that I mentioned earlier that ought to be encouraging dialogue, dispute, learning from each other, and educating each other. Now, these may be fairly obscure controversies I just gave you, but they are indicative of a yet wider problem.

Expectations of acceptability and a preference for unchallenged ideas—this all chips away at the most sacred civic freedoms in America. No one learns more by less debate. Neglecting to defend free speech and champion the free exchange of ideas creates a pathway for censorship. Democracy doesn't thrive on censorship.

The institutions of the news media ought to defend the fundamental principles behind free speech and free press at the top of their lungs. The First Amendment is the oxygen of their own existence.

If they were doing their work, there shouldn't have to be a single Senator here in the U.S. Senate giving speeches about why they don't want more free speech and why they want less free speech.

Last fall, the New York Post had a story censored on Twitter a short time before the election. Regardless of what one thinks about the content of that story, the methods of reporting, or even the tone of the writing, the suppression of information like that should alarm both news writers and news consumers. They ought to be more a protector of freedom of speech and freedom of press than a Senator here on the U.S. Senate talking about it.

Many outlets went to work fact-checking or reporting on the topic in their own way. That is all well and good. It is their job. But the public conversation about the censorship devolved into a question of whether Twitter had the legal ability to do what it did instead of a discussion of whether it was the right thing to do, because it wasn't right. Even Twitter's CEO sees that now.

However, there were no fiery defenses of free speech and free press from the mainstream outlets, and those mainstream outlets ought to be the ones talking more about freedom of speech and freedom of press than having Senators on the floor of the U.S. Senate bring it up and say: Why aren't you doing your job? Why aren't you practicing your profession as it ought to be? Why aren't you being the policemen of the system the way you ought to be?

Not even media with caveats were reporting about that Twitter event that I just spoke about. This was a perfect opportunity for journalistic institutions to weigh in, and they should have weighed in. They have a dog in the fight. It should be the bread-and-butter issues for every editorial board across the country—not just the editorial board but the reporters. The lack of this kind of pro-free press and pro-free speech advocacy also contributes to the unhealthy environment that shuns debate and silences dissent.

So what will be the consequences of a media environment where conformity and comfort take precedent over the free exchange of ideas? The first and most obvious is a less rigorous and less informed public discourse and the citi-

zens less informed. Opinions and preferences, especially on matters of public interest, are always improved after being challenged.

If you disagree with the New York Times' editorial board or a pundit for FOX News, that is fine.

It would be better if the public heard all about it. Broader discussions mean broader understanding. Without a broad, vigorous public debate, we lose empathy that results from engaging with somebody else's ideas.

In these divisive times in society, empathy is in low supply. The last thing that we lose in a media environment ruled by compliance and conformity is the grand American tradition of dissent.

Free speech and free press have centuries-long history in America, from Thomas Paine's pamphlets to the tweets spreading across the land this very minute, the revolutionary contest of ideas might take a different shape but remain critical to our civic culture and the continued growth of our Nation and the strengthening of our democracy.

I hope more institutions in the "fourth estate" will take an aggressive approach advocating free speech.

Now, I wasn't around when Thomas Paine published "Common Sense," but history and my own experience teaches me two important lessons: The free exchange of ideas strengthens representative government and will, then, help preserve our democratic Republic for generations to come. And that is what this generation should be all about, making it better for the next generation, both from the standpoint of the economy but also for an understanding of our democratic institutions.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar No. 28 and Calendar No. 36; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the Record; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of William Joseph Burns, of Maryland, to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; and Brian P. McKeon, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, I rise in opposition to the nomination of William Burns to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Communist China is the biggest threat our Nation faces. General Secretary Xi will stop at nothing in his quest for world domination and has made clear that he seeks to push the United States out of the Indo-Pacific and weaken and intimidate his neighbors, including our allies. Communist China continues to threaten to take Taiwan by force.

Communist China is committing a genocide against the Uighurs and stripping Hong kongers of their basic rights. China sees the United States as its global adversary and is taking the steps necessary to "win" the great power conflict of the 21st century. China is taking every opportunity it can around the world to gain influence and exert control.

I am concerned that some past statements and actions by Ambassador Burns indicate an inaccurate view of Communist China and the danger it poses to our Nation and to Americans. Any U.S. official who thinks that China can play a positive role in the world, particularly among developing states or as a contributor to peace and stability, is mistaken. Ambassador Burns has not shown that he understands the threat that Communist China represents.

I am also troubled that Ambassador Burns' view of Castro's Communist regime in Cuba is equally flawed. I cannot support anyone who backed the failed Obama-Biden appeasement policies, which did nothing to help the Cuban people and allowed Havana to extend its reach and expand its control, giving power to other ruthless dictatorships in Latin America.

My opposition to Ambassador Burns' nomination is grounded in our fundamentally different views. Ambassador Burns has not demonstrated that he understands the threats we face around the world and the causes of those threats. We need leaders who will be strong and stand up for American interests in the face of dangerous regimes like Cuba and China, regimes that are committed to harm the United States and our allies.

For all these reasons, Mr. President, I oppose Ambassador Burns' nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Burns and McKeon nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the postclosure time on the Walsh nomination be considered expired and the Senate vote on the confirmation of the nomination at 5:30 p.m., Monday, March 22.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 32.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Shalanda D. Young, of Louisiana, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 32, Shalanda D. Young, of Louisiana, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Charles E. Schumer, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, Christopher A. Coons, Jon Tester, Gary C. Peters, Brian Schatz, Sherrod Brown, Patty Murray, Jon Ossoff, Joe Manchin III, Thomas R. Carper, Debbie Stabenow, Martin Heinrich, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Jeanne Shaheen, Mark R. Warner, Kyrsten Sinema.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 39.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Vivek Hallegere Murthy, of Florida, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, subject to qualifications therefor as provided by law and regulations, and to be Surgeon General of the Public Health Service for a term of four years.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 39, Vivek Hallegere Murthy, of Florida, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, subject to qualifications therefor as provided by law and regulations, and to be Surgeon General of the Public Health Service for a term of four years.

Charles E. Schumer, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, Christopher A. Coons, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jon Tester, Richard Blumenthal, Michael F. Bennet, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Jeanne Shaheen, Debbie Stabenow, Thomas R. Carper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Elizabeth Warren, Patty Murray, Alex Padilla, Tina Smith, Tim Kaine.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 40.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Rachel Leland Levine, of Pennsylvania, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services.